critical digest

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May 13,1955 Vol. VII No 34 The Weekly New York City Theatre Newsletter $25 Year

This Week

Finian's Rainbow- City Center 5/18. 3rd bill of NYC Light Opera Company season. Revival with Helen Gallagher, Anita Alvarez, Will Mahoney.

Once Upon a Tailor- Cort 5/23. Playwrights Co. presents new comedy by Baruch Lumet with Oscar Karlweis, Jennie Goldstein. Directed by Joseph Anthony.

Future Dates

Twin Bill- Greenwich Mews 5/25...Seventh Heaven -ANTA 5/26.

Almost Crazy-Holiday 6/1...King & Duke-Circle in Square 6/5...First Edition-Bijou 7/7...The Trial-Provincetown 6/8 ...Arabian Nights-Jones Beach 6/23.

Fall Dates

D'oyly Carte-Shubert 9/27...Red Roses for Me-10/20...A View of Bridge 9/27...Diary of a Young Girl 10/5...The Lark-10/12 ...No Time for Comedy 10/20.

Summer Issues C.D.

Summer issues of "C.D" will cover tryouts of new plays in Eastern summer theatres as reported in trade journals, daily papers, and personal inspection. Other features.

Digests of Current Week Theatre Reviews

Safari- Barbizon Plaza 5/11/55-5/15/55. Con was unanimous verdict of daily reviwers on new revue which featured Bobby Breen and Alan Abel. Gelb, Times, thought some of the dancers might do well in a more distinguished setting. Kerr, Herald Tribune, is convinced that what the theatre needs is some tired, beat up old professionals, rather than bright, new faces. Cast could not overcome shallow material, sums up Strassberg, Mirror. Except for fact that revue answers question what ever happened to Bobby Breen, Watts, Post, would like to forget the whole thing. Breen is only pro in cast, notes Hawkins, World Telegram & Sun, most of the rest are inaudible. Cast should take tip from title and go on trip, pans McClain, Journal American. Show folded after 7 performances.

Damn Yankee-46th St Theatre 5/5. 100% pro notices filed for Gwen Verdon, her dancing, Ray Walston, and the new musical with lyrics and music by Richard Adler and Jerry Ross and book by George Abbott and Douglass Wallop. There is a considerable amount of talent in show which makes up for some of the wide open spots that pop up every now and then, summed up Fune, Times. An appealing idea, a couple of first rate performers and an intermittent flair for raising the roof, concludes Kerr, Herald Tribune. Show does lack, he fears, staying power. A wonderful musical, adds Chapman, News. A truly tremendous musical which should last as long as Gwen Verdon reports McClain Journal American. Though show has a way of faltering from time to time, Verdon is unfailing. Star proves she can be a winner in any musical derby she cares to enter, believes Hawkins, WT&S. If someone will ripple the occassional calm of the second act it could be an endless delight, critic suggests.

London Report-

The Lark, Jean Anouilh's drama about St Joan, has neither the size nor the compassion of Shaw's Saint Joan,, though it is above the level of most plays, reports Atkinson, Times, on the London production...West End production of Teahouse of the August Moon is completely lacking in affectation, simple and relaxed, critic notes...Thornton Wilder's The Matchmaker with Ruth Gordon and Sam Levene was rated by Times wanderer as about the freshest farce of the decade, extraordinarily funny.

New Haven RR Show Train

New Haven RR May 20 Show Train will attend "Ankles Aweigh" Current issue of "C.D." will be presented to theatre goers on special train.

"Salute to Paris Week" activities in NY theatre will include the distribution to each NY theatre audience of an appeal written by Robert Sherwood for ANTA urging fans to contribute to the international project. Also the "Broadway" street signs will be changed for the week to read "Champs E lysees. Philharmonia Orchestra of Philadelphia will open "Salute to France" program in Paris Opera House next week. NY City Ballet will play in Paris June 8. Medea with Judith Anderson will play a week starting June 14, Oklahoma will play June 20, and The Skin of Our Teeth, with Helen Hayes and Mary Martin, is due in French city June 28.

Plays

Once Upon a Tailor has switched its opening night forward to May 23 at Cort ...House of Flowers due to close June 4 3 for Tonight will close in June due to Las Vegas engagement of Harry Belefonte ...D'Oyly Carte troupe opens 32 week US tour July 2 in Central City, Col, and opens in NY Sept 27 at Shubert Theatre for 9 week run..."My Philadelphia Brother" the story of Col Biddle to be turned into play by Joseph Hayes...Seven Year Itch switched to 2 performances Sundays...Robert Sherwood's "Small War on Murray Hill" may be directed by Alfred Lunt.

Players

Joan Alexander subs for Patricia Jessel during July in Witness for the Prosecution...Rodgers & Hammerstein have given 2 scholarships to Professional Training Program-American Theatre Wing ...Paula Lawrence and David Brooks will sub for leads in "Trouble in Tahiti" in All in One when Alice Ghostley and John Tyers present work at Hollywood Bowl... Nicholas Saunders replaced Carl Low in Anastasia...May 20 New Haven Railroad Show Train to visit Ankles Aweigh.

Other Broadways

Porgy and Bess extended Rome run to 5 weeks...Saint of Bleecker Street drew 25 curtain calls in Milan... Original cast members appearing in Guys and Dolls in Las Vegas include Robert Alda, Vivian Blaine, Sam Levene, and B.S. Pully.

Summer Playhouses

3 Players of a Summer Game by Tennessee Williams will be performed June 12 at White Barn Theatre, Westport, Conn...A View from the River, Arthur Miller's twin bill, will be tried out prior to NY opening Aug 22 at Falmouth, Mass...Stock Theatre Alliance, Inc formed by summer and winter stock producers... Variety counts 11 new summer theatres this year.

Award Department

1954-55 "Theatre World" awards for "the most promising personalities of the Broadway stage" include Shirl Conway, Barbara Cook, David Daniels of Plain and Fancy, Mary Fickett, Anthony Perkins, Tea and Sympathy, Loretta Leversee, Home is the Hero, Julie Andrews, The Boy Friend, Jack Lord, The Traveling Lady, Dennis Patrick, The Wayward Saint, Christopher Plummer, The Dark Is Light Enough, Jacqueline Brookes, The Cretan Woman, Page Johnson, In April Once.

Theatre Vaudeville Notes

Tito Rodrigues heads new Mambo Revue at Palace with Cuban Pete and Millie, Tony Milo and 30 entertainers. Mambo contests nig .

Theatre Film Notes

Audrey Hepburn will play Viola and Sebastian in Joseph Mankiewicz film "Twelfth Night"...David Wayne will co-star with Frank Sinatra and Debbie Reynolds in MGM "Tender Trap".

Theatre TV & Radio Notes

Mutual Radio 15 year old "Theatre of Air" series dropped, final program May 7 was "Bittersweet"...Noel Coward's Dinner at Eight to be presented June 1 CBS TV 10 PM. ...CBS TV trying to get rights to televise final night June 18 of 3 for Tonight... EBC TV will present One Touch of Venus Aug 27 at 9 from Dallas State Fair.

CRITICAL DIGEST- weekly digests NYC show news, reviews, comments from 50 publications. Tickets, critics reports. Covers NY shows, drama books, drama records, theatre on TV. Also west coast theatre briefs. Special summer features. Perfect gift 52 weeks per year for "stage struck" friends, business acquaintances, etc.

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GREEN ROOM DEPARTMENT

CRITICS APPRECIATED...Though playgoers may not want their opinions formed for them by other people, there are times when they welcome being warned about certain plays being well below standard, lists "Stage" editorial as one conclusion of the recent London newspaper strike. At the moment fans have to pay their own good money to find out for themselves. Even artists and managers miss those pithy comments that look so good when quoted a yard high on posters.

COLUMN TIPS...Did George DeWitt and the Palace manager slug it out backstage, asks Winchell ...Judy Garland and Ray Bolger may star in musical by Sid Luft, hears Walker...The Cloud With the Violin is name of new Noel Coward script, notes Kilgallen

DRAMA MAIL BOX...Inaudiable speech of many actors this season panned by Times reader who feels sure that acting is speech as well as gesture and tone...The off Broadway movement has probably grown up enough this year to have an adult trade organization of producers aiding,not fighting,each other,bets a "C.D." reader.

CRITICAL THOUGHTS...The Desert Song was just as outdated in its original 1926 production as it is today, explains Watts,Post...Art is fine,but it is better when its funny, sums up Kerr,Herald Tribune, looking at theatre of past few weeks...Why can't 5 For Tonight producer find another singer to take Harry Belafonte's place instead of closing the show, asks Chapman,News.

COLUMNISTS VS. CRITICS...The survival of Ankles Aweigh ,which the critics panned, does not mean that the columnists,which have plugged musical, are more powerful in molding public opinion than the critics, notes Gaver, WT & S. Word of mouth and the ability of a producer to spend money to hang on through the rough weeks is one of the reasons. Critics have the duty to report on a production as a whole. The columnist is under no such obligation.

INTERVIEW HI-LITES...Phoenix producers plan a series of experimental plays that would be rehearsed for one week and be given for six performances at the conclusion of the regularly scheduled runs, Norris Houghton told Lane, News...William Inge does not consider himself as belonging to any school of writers, he told Keany, WT&S. Action in his plays come secondary to character. He admires Chekhov,but thinks he is influenced by the Irish as much.

"Pros & Cons by T.M.K."

Billy Budd production of Masquers at Rooftop Theatre is an excellent,exciting production of one of the most talked about,but seldom seen plays. Entire cast gave near-perfect portrayals in their roles. Staging,sets and lighting aided in providing a stimulating,worthwhile evening of Off Broadway theatre. Though theatre is off-off Broadway, the production is well worth the trip downtown.

Damn Yankees is an evening full of fun thanks to the dancing-prancing of Gwen Verdon. Book and lyrics do not match either the original idea or the full talents of its star. But the opportunites presented Miss Verdon to dance and walk across stage in a variety of numbers are enough to interest the theatre fan and more than enough to excit the out-of town fans.

OFF

BROADWAY

Theatre De Lys transfer from John & Anita Post management to Lucille Lortel management can go ahead as scheduled, barring further legal difficulties. Suit by Max Eisen, press agent and stock holder of Senior Estates, was denied by NY Supreme Court Judge Greenberg. Eisen plans to appeal suit.

Phoenix '55 and Shoestring Revue have both extended their runs. Air conditioning will be installed at the Phoenix.

Highway Robbery, an Israeli comedy in English, will be presented by Heritage Group Theatre at the President this fall. Moshe Shamir is author of play currently playing in Tel Aviv.

Baccinale, a newplay by Andrew Boracci , will be presented at Provincetown by Playmakers Company...Teach Me How to Cry closed at Theatre De Lys...Jack Fletcher has replaced William LeMassena in Thieves Carnival at Cherry Lane... Thomas Davis Irish Players will present St. John Ervine's Boyd's Shop May 21-22 at Master Institute.

Billy Budd, presented by Masquers, at Rooftop Theatre, Second Avenue and Houston St above the Downtown National, was highly recommended by Geor,Variety, and Kerner,Women's Wear,as one of the better Off Broadway offerings. Group, Variety mugg, okayed is competent throughout with entire production marked by fervor and drive. They have put themselves in fore-front of Off Broadway companies with this rip-roaring first production,adds Womens Wear reviewer. Critic suggests playgoers sit in front of large cave like theatre.

The Maids, Jean Genet's long one act play presented by Tempo Playhouse, 4 St. Marks Place by Bevasso & Gundy, is one of the boldest,theatrically imaginative and artistically successful new dramas to be done within recent memory, raved Kerner, Women's Wear. The production, he continued, is a stunning achievement in acting,staging, and lighting.

Yiddish Theatre Notes

Second Avenue Theatre has been leased by Irving Jacobson and Irving Grossman who will present a series of American-Yiddish musicals starting in October...Brooklyn's Palace Theatre, has been leased by Jacob Jacobs who will present 4 modern American-Yiddish musicals next season, each to run for 6 weeks. Jacobs has presented Yiddish plays for 18 years at Brooklyn's Parkway Theatre, which is now being converted into a church.

THEATRE

RECORD

COMMENTS

"Caught in the Act", part two of Victor Borge's Comedy in Music (Columbia) was billed as an entertaining package by Variety reviewer. Recorded at an actual performance it is prime comedy .

THEATRE

BOOK

COMMENTS

"Freud on Broadway" by W. David Sievers (Hermitage) is a thorough job combing modern drama for Freudian implications which sometimes tries to hard, rates Down,Variety.

THEATRE

TV

COMMENTS

"Shoestring Revue" version presented on WABD proved to Gross,News, to be a show with a number of clever ideas,most of which must have seemed more entertaining on paper than before the cameras.